DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 106 941 EA 007 134

AUTHOR Riles, Wilson
TITLE Educational Leadership in an Era of Accountability.
PUB DATE 23 Feb 75
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (107th, Dallas, Texas, February 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Early Childhood Education; *Educational Accountability; Educational Administration; Educational Legislation; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; *Leadership; *Master Plans; *Program Improvement; *State School District Relationship; Statewide Planning

ABSTRACT

Given the present economic situation, it is inevitable that more state legislatures and school boards will adopt a "cost accounting" attitude toward education. However, schools aren't factories, and using an industrial model for accountability doesn't work. To have a viable system of accountability, everyone who is concerned with education must be involved, including teachers, administrators, school boards, legislators, governors, parents, and students. But what must be done to make this all happen? The answer is leadership. Four years ago, the California Superintendent of Public Instruction appointed a high-level task force of experts in the field of child growth and development. The task force provided the basic philosophic guidance for development of an early childhood education program as well as many practical recommendations. Staff members of the State Department of Education were then assigned to develop a practical plan for implementation. Later, the completed master plan was taken to the State Board of Education, which adopted it as official policy. Ten months later, SB 1302, the Magna Carta of early childhood education, was passed. This early childhood education program is an example of leadership in an era of accountability. (Author/JG)

ED106941

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
107th Annual Convention
Dallas, Texas February 21-24, 1975

SPEAKER: Wilson Riles, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Sacramento, California

TOPIC: Sixth Distinguished Lecture to the AASA National Academy for School Executives: "Educational Leadership in An Era of Accountability"

PLACE: North Ballroom, Sheraton Dallas Hotel

TIME: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Sunday, February 23

PROGRAM: Page 8

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

I am pleased at this chance to address such a distinguished gathering of school executives, and the occasion is even more pleasurable for me as I look out and see so many familiar faces.

Joe Sarthory, your associate director, has asked me to talk to you about "Educational Leadership in an Era of Accountability" -- and that, I think, pretty neatly sums up the age in which we find ourselves. People are looking for leadership, and they are demanding accountability -- from politicians, doctors, businessment, and educators.

In many ways, we educators have always been accountable to the American people.

Education in the United States traditionally has been a vehicle for upward mobility. Our "huddled masses" turned toward education as their pathway up and out of the ghetto. It was through education that the son of an immigrant Russian peasant could become a bank president or a surgeon. We've all heard the Jewish stories about the mother who refers to "my son, the doctor". Whether they are Irish, Chinese, Swedish, or Italian -- black or white, red or brown -- the word from parents to their children in this country has always been -- "Get an education. Make something of yourself."

While some Americans have made fun of the intellectual, and sneered at the egghead, they have also perceived public education as the road to financial success and the good life.

We expect our educational system not only to ensure our personal success, we expect it to solve all sorts of local and national problems. Schools are often blamed and criticized for society's failures, but seldom are schools given credit for society's achievements.

During the 19th century, the schools were asked to "Americanize" and make literate in English the millions of immigrants who were crowding our cities. Today, the schools still are being asked to Americanize hundreds of thousands of children -- to make them literate in English, while simultaneously teaching them history and mathematics in their own language.

EA 007 134

Our schools are being asked to feed children, teach them manners and morals, and make good drivers of them.

Those demands have accelerated since World War II. Obviously, illiterate people can't function in today's society. We have to teach our children how to perform well in a technological age. The market for strong backs and weak minds is dwindling and soon

it will be gone. That means even more emphasis on education -- and it means education must be relevant to what is going to be demanded of our children during the last quarter of this century and the beginning of the 21st century.

The demand for quality in education comes at a time when our schools are facing a money squeeze just like the one the housewife must face when she goes to the supermarket.

We live in a time when bad economic news is rippling from one end of the nation to the other. Many of us lie awake nights wondering where we are going to get the dollars to maintain programs and balance budgets. Everywhere we look, we find legislators and governors casting about for ways to cut, trim, and squeeze. The word is -- make do, be cautious, cut back.

It reminds me of what Senator Norris Cotton of New Hampshire once said of his economy-minded fellow senators. He said, "The boys are in such a mood that if someone introduced the Ten Commandments, they'd cut them down to eight."

Well, that's the kind of mood Americans are in today.

Given our present economic situation, it is inevitable that more and more state legislatures and school boards will adopt a "cost accounting" attitude toward education. Pressed for more money, they react by demanding more accountability. Too often, the accountability they envision is an industrial model -- raw material comes in at one end, and a finished product, meeting certain quality standards, emerges from the other end. If the product isn't up to snuff, it can be discarded, or recalled.

We can't do that with human beings.

Our schools have no control over the cultural backgrounds and educational abilities of the thousands and thousands of youngsters who each year present themselves at the classroom door for the first time. I'm not advocating that the schools be given any control over their home life. I'm simply saying that schools aren't factories, and using an industrial model for accountability and cost control doesn't work. You know, a steel mill can reject low-grade ore and a lumber mill can turn down crooked logs, but our public schools must educate -- one way or the other -- every child who presents himself. We can't throw human beings on the junk heap.

Our concern over accountability has opened the door for a new crop of reformers -- some of them accompanied by gusts of publicity, some sincere, and some who are charlatans. We hear those who have simplistic answers to what ails our schools -- "Teach phonics and every child will learn to read." -- "Use the voucher system and our schools will shape up." When the schools fail to properly educate the children of the poor -- "Decentralize.... take control of schools away from the establishment and turn it over to the community." Some say, "Lower the mandatory age for school attendance." This latter concept, to me, is the grossest kind of cop-out. We simply can't wash our hands of responsibility and walk away. Together, we must grapple with the problems. Saddling the problem on the backs of frustrated, untrained parents is not going to provide programs that meet the educational needs of their children. Neither will turning them out on the street at age fourteen.

We need to define what accountability is. To me, in its broadest sense, accountability means we set goals and objectives, lay out the strategy for meeting them, assign the responsibility for who is to do what, and evaluate whether we've done the job or not.

Responsibility is the key. I don't often quote Admiral Rickover, but he put it well when he said: "Responsibility is a unique concept. It can only reside and adhere in a single individual. You may share it with others, but your portion is not diminished. You may

delegate it, but it is still with you. You may disclaim it, but you cannot divest yourself of it. Even if you do not recognize it or admit its presence, you cannot escape it. If responsibility is rightfully yours, no evasion or ignorance, or passing the blame can shift the burden on someone else. Unless you can point your finger at the man who is responsible when something goes wrong, then you never had anyone really responsible."

It's important for us to remember that to some accountability is a threatening word.

Some teachers and teacher organizations, as you know, say they're afraid we're going to start firing people because Johnny doesn't read well enough. There is concern that teachers some day will be forced into some sort of "production quota" to hang onto tenure.

Teachers point out that they don't have control over every aspect of children's lives -- nor should they. If Johnny arrives at his classroom every morning hungry because he has had no breakfast -- or dazed because of a beating from his parents -- we can't expect his teacher to turn him into an intellectual giant.

I used an exaggerated example to illustrate what concerns teachers have with the concept of accountability. Many of them fear that accountability may turn our schools into the educational equivalent of a cookie-cutter, stamping out graduates in a uniform mold because it's more cost-effective.

That isn't my concept of accountability, and I know it isn't yours, either.

Too often, we talk about accountability as if it pertains only to teachers. We make teachers accountable, and no one else. We dump kids in the classroom and say to the teacher -- "You are accountable."

It seems to me that if we are to have a viable system of accountability, we must include everyone who is concerned with education. That includes teachers, obviously -- but it also means administrators. After all, administrators must create an environment where teachers can be successful. It means school boards, legislators, and governors. They control the purse strings for education. It means parents, because they are responsible for the guidance of their children's lives. And it means students themselves, because we expect children to put forth some effort toward learning.

Accountability takes in taxpayers. They can't say -- "Take this pittance we're going to dole out, and be accountable." We expect -- we have a right to expect -- adequate support for our children's schools.

In any system of accountability -- whether it's in Texas or California or New York -- there must be reasonable goals that reasonable people can agree on. Our strategies must be based on those goals, and there must be an evaluation, to determine whether those goals are being met.

Obviously, then, we must realize that parents should be involved in decision-making. They must understand what it's all about.

But what must be done to make all this happen?

The answer is leadership. As an illustration, I shall use our experience in implementing our Early Childhood Education Master Plan.

Four years ago, I appointed a high-level task force of experts in the field of child growth and development. When that group assembled for its first meeting, I asked them not to tell us what was wrong with education, but what they would recommend if they had an opportunity to

design a program that would provide the highest quality early childhood education for California's children. I asked them to forget the existing system and to start afresh. In my charge to the task force, I said:

> "Research findings consistently document that as much as fifty percent of a child's intellectual potential is developed before he reaches school age and eighty percent is developed by the age of eight. I am not satisfied that we have focused a sufficient portion of our energy and resources in this critical area. If our goal is to equip our children so that they may successfully continue their education, we must revise our priorities. No child should leave the third grade without being able to read, write, and calculate in accord with accepted standards. The need for costly and frequently unsuccessful remediation programs can be sharply reduced if we increase the intensity and quality of educational programs during the early growth period. I ask this task force to develop a comprehensive, integrated master plan for early childhood education for consideration during the 1972 legislative session."

The task force worked for nearly a year and by the end of 1971 had submitted its report. It was both practical and inspirational. They had, indeed, followed the advise of Ralph Waldo Emerson and "hitched their wagon to a star".

The task force provided us with the basic philosophic guidance for development of our program. They told us:

> "The people of the state of California must make a long-range commitment of funds to the proposition that the first eight years of life are the most important period in determining the future effectiveness of all our citizens.
>
> "Implicit in this commitment is the recognition of the desirability of providing equal educational opportunities for all children. Certainly every child aged four through eight, regardless of his environmental, emotional, and physical needs,should be included in this recognition...."

There is more to this statement which spells out in detail those components of an early childhood education program essential to its success -- emphasis on needs assessment, early diagnosis, intervention and prevention, parent and teacher involvement in planning the local program, encouragement of local autonomy and maximum flexibility -- and which concludes with:

> "Implicit in this proposal, too, is the recognition that the individual child is the unique recipient of instruction. We, therefore, believe that the present large group approach to the education of primary children must change significantly in order to make possible the necessary personalized instruction."

The task force hitched to its "star" of philosophy a wagon full of practical recommendations:

* All children in California between four and eight should have the opportunity to be served by a publicly-supported primary school.
* Goals must be clearly defined so that the results of the program can be evaluated.
* Adequate funds must be allocated for the successful operation of the proposed primary school.
* The primary school must become a community educational center, combining all the resources of the family and the community in order to serve children and their parents.
* Parent education and involvement must be an integral part of the

primary school program.

* An environment appropriate for primary education must reflect the nature and needs of the young child.
* The pupil's medical, dental, and nutritional needs should be met, and social services, day care, and counseling must be provided.

and, finally --

* The preparation of staff for early childhood education should receive continued emphasis in California.

Once the task force work had been completed, I assigned members of the State Department of Education staff to document the need for this reform of primary education and to develop a practical plan for implementation. We soon discovered as we compiled the guidelines, funding sources, application dates, and so on, of all the fragmented programs we had which dealt with the education of children, that, in the words of POGO -- "We had seen the enemy and they were us." Our fragmented apporach to education was part of the problem.

We documented reading scores, math scores, dropout rates, and all of the other evidences of need to supplant these fragmented efforts with a single comprehensive program.

The staff, by early 1972, had compiled the Early Childhood Education Proposal, a Master Plan to Redesign Primary Education in California. The master plan not only contained specific evidence of need, but concrete plans for solution of the problem.

Decision-making bodies are not interested in philosophy. They want facts and we had the facts.

We took the master plan to the State Board of Education. The Board adopted the plan as official policy. This gave us the authority to draft legislation.

In the early months of 1972, bills were introduced in both houses of our legislature and the long process of negotiation began. While we were busy rallying support from diverse interest groups to secure passage of the legislation, we were also hard at work preparing for implementation. We brought together 150 people from districts throughout the state to assist with the draft of the guidelines for the program.

We were operating on two fronts -- lobbying for passage of the bill and deciding how implementation should proceed when the bill was passed. Those were exciting and hectic days in California. The inclusion of four-year-olds drew the most fire -- I was accused of snatching babies from their mother's arms and forcing them to learn to read before they were weaned. We compromised that one -- four-year-olds will wait until the program is more fully implemented and proven at the K-3 level. Parents descended upon the legislature and demanded that they be involved in development of local plans -- not just act as advisory bodies.

We supported their demands and parent involvement was amended into the bills. After many hearings, everyone agreed to support the Senate version of the bill and ten months after its introduction, SB 1302, the Magna Carta of Early Childhood Education, was passed.

The master plan is now in its second year of operation. We provide technical assistance teams to the field to help with the implementation. The teams explain guidelines and encourage local school site groups of principals, teachers, and parents as they work their way through the requirements for needs assessment, planning, and development of operational plans. We have "monitor and review teams" in the field to follow progress and to help where assistance is needed. We are not mandating methodology or objectives -- we are helping local schools to do their own thing. At the end of the first year, we evaluated the results in terms of effectiveness -- where it counts, in the classroom with the children.

From all of the evidence we have seen to date, early childhood education is a success. Children are more eager to learn and they are learning more. We are finally preventing failure rather than providing too little, too late in the form of remediation.

A typical child in our program made eleven months' gain in reading for every ten months of instruction. In mathematics, it was twelve months' gain for every ten months' instruction.

In some cases, when certain categorical aid programs were brought in under the Early Childhood Education program, some children had gains of sixteen months for every ten months of instruction. That was an isolated case -- not the average -- but it shows the results that are possible.

To me, our Early Childhood Education program is an example of leadership in an era of accountability.

It wasn't easy. Early Childhood Education means more work for the teachers, the parents, and the administrators. There are lots of complaints about too much paperwork. But the teachers who complain about the paperwork are enthusiastic about the program. They don't want to go back to the old way of teaching.

Early Childhood Education has been expanded this year to take in twenty percent of our public school children in the primary grades. We're shooting for one hundred percent involvement during the next three years.

We're not supermen in California. Early Childhood Education isn't a panacea. It isn't the only way to respond to demands for improved quality of education. But it does show what we can do if we combine leadership and accountability.

I hope that this description of our experience will give you courage and determination to lead -- to be accountable -- to bring your dreams of quality education to fruition. Heed Emerson's advise: "Hitch your wagon to a star." Make no small plans. The children are waiting.

- 0000000000 -